NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

March 22, 2005
3:00 p.m. EST

Coordinator   Ladies and gentlemen, welcome and thank you for joining the

Neighborhood Networks conference call. Joining you now is Michele

Higgs. Please go ahead, ma'am.

M. Higgs   Thank you, Barbara. Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the

Neighborhood Networks' March conference call. The topic for today's

call is, "Doing Good and Doing Well, Measuring Your Center's Efforts."

My name is Michele Higgs and I'm one of the technical assistance

coordinators working with you as we address the technical assistance

needs of the various Neighborhood Networks across the nation.

Before I introduce this afternoon's speaker, I want to remind the

multifamily Neighborhood Networks centers that the Strategic Tracking

and Reporting Tool, also known as the START business plan, contains

resource materials that will help you survey your residents' needs and

interests, as well as showing you information on developing an internal

marketing plan. START is quite important in the measurement of your

center's performance in that it offers templates for the tracking and

evaluation of center activities and resident participation. Monitoring

activities is crucial when approaching potential funders and partners.

If you have questions about the START business plan, or resident surveys,

or internal marketing plans, or general questions pertaining to

Neighborhood Networks, please call the toll free Neighborhood Networks

information line at (888) 312-2743. You can also visit the Neighborhood

Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. I also want to

remind listeners that an audio and verbatim transcript of this call will be

made available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about 2-

weeks.

At this time, I would like to invite you to join me in welcoming three new

centers to the Neighborhood Networks family. First is the Reverend

Larry A. Gutierrez S.S.J. Learning Center, in Port Arthur, Texas; then

there's the Brownsville Gardens Apartments in Brooklyn, New York; and

finally, the Galilee Pavilion Neighborhood Networks center in Levittown,

Pennsylvania. We are always happy to welcome a new center into the

family and we are overjoyed to welcome all three of you today. We look

forward to working with you and we invite you to contact us with

questions by using the toll free Neighborhood Networks information

centerline, which is (888) 312-2743.

This afternoon, we will discuss the importance of creating and

maintaining tracking and evaluation systems for your Neighborhood

Networks centers. Keeping track of the many activities at your centers

can be one daunting task. However, it is a necessary and worthwhile task

and I'll tell you why.

You want to be sure that the programs you're offering are actually useful

to the population that you're serving. You want to be sure that the

residents are getting the most that they can out of your center, and that the

programs are serving them the way you intended them to. It is also

important to be able to report data in meaningful ways for fundraising

purposes. When considering the investments that they make in your

center, funders want to see data that support the work that you're

performing. You need to start off right at the beginning with a needs

assessment of your residents. You'll find out what your residents want,

what they need and get a look at the skills levels, what abilities, where

their abilities are. Then you can meet them at the level of their needs and competence. The whole point of this exercise is to help your residents reach a level of self-sufficiency and strength by helping them to gain and polish their computer skills.

Our speaker for today is Thom Mahoney, Technical Assistance Online Services Coordinator for the Grove Neighborhood Network at Island Grove Village Apartments in Greeley, Colorado. His center is a free community computer lab located in the offices at IGV, Island Grove Village, a HUD Section 8 multifamily complex located about an hour north of Denver. While he has been a long-time computer user, technical and commercial writer, auto mechanics instructor, itinerant musician and ranch hand, he is joining us today to give us the benefit of his 9-years of experience with Neighborhood Networks. He will speak to us about his center and the systems that he has used to track and evaluate the programs there and I'm sure his remarks will resonate with many of you.

I'm pleased to introduce to you, Mr. Thom Mahoney. Thom, go ahead.

T. Mahoney   Thank you, Michele. I think that the 9-years of experience probably serves me best in the number of things that I haven't done well and haven't

done right, and I think that that's a good way to try to approach some of

the needs for evaluating your center. What I like to do is I'm going to tell

you a little bit about Island Grove, the apartment complex, a little bit

about the Neighborhood Networks and then, move towards what kind of

record keeping we do and how we make use of it.

Island Grove is a Section 8 apartment complex, as Michele mentioned, an

hour North of Denver in Greeley, Colorado. It's called rural, but we here

in Greeley don't like to call it rural. We have 108 units and we're all

Section 8. It was built in the '70s as part of an outreach mission of a

church and they created a nonprofit corporation to build the complex and

other than they are the board and they're involved with it, we are not

necessarily faith-based.

The lab itself was created in—our grand opening was in February '97,

although we opened in November and it has been a couple of months

messing things up before we had a grand opening. Since February of '97,

we expanded doubling the space of the lab in '99, and so now, the lab

itself is 345 square feet, which works out to be about 23 feet by 15 feet, so

you can see it's a fairly small lab. We also have a community room that's

right adjacent to it that is used for just about everything here in Island

Grove, but during the day it's used for students working at a table and working together. We do not have regular classes as a general rule, like we come in and sign up for Microsoft Word class. Rather, we just have an open-door policy. Whatever anybody wants, when they walk in the door, we figure out a way to make it happen.

We have 18 computers; 3 of them are servers, 2 of them are administrative computers and 13 computers in the lab. Sometimes, we have as many as 15, but I just went and counted them, we only have 13 working right now. We have all the standard Microsoft Office software. We offer GED preparation, although we don't administer tests. We offer English as a second language (ESL), job training and job preparation programs. We have high-speed Internet at all the computers and of course, we have the required number of games.

Since we've been open, we've had 49 students get their GEDs. In the part of Colorado we live, there's about a dozen GED programs, and we tend to get the students who have successfully not completed any other program. So we typically see students with fourth and fifth grade reading levels and we help them along one-on-one, tutoring them as they work their way through to get their GEDs. We're hoping to get our 50th next month.

Since we've been open, we've had about 2,000 different clients, that's

about 1,500 of them are adults and about 500 of them are kids. We've had

about 18,000 visits, so that means that 1,500 people coming back and

forth a bunch of times, we've had about 18,000 visits. And that means,

we've been open for—I tallied up all the hours we've been open. We've

been open about 16,000 or 17,000 hours since February of '97, when we

began keeping records.

Now, I'm going to talk a little about our record-keeping system. When we

started the lab in November, we just opened up the doors and then, about

the second week of November, when we were all ready to close the lab

and commit suicide, we decided--

M. Higgs   That bad?

T. Mahoney   It gets a little rowdy sometimes. We didn't understand the kind of controls

that would be necessary. So I don't mean, like not just signs, "Please don't

chew gum," but we understood very quickly that we needed to always

have adults or a certain number of adults per number of kids. We

understood the kind of needs that our adult clients would have. We really

didn't quite understand how demanding 20 people in the lab, at one time,

half of them studying Algebra, what it could do to your brain by the end of

the day, so it took us a while to get used to that.

But we also understood that we really had no decent records. It was like,

"Well, I think Jimmy was here last week," and so "Okay, he was there."

So we set out to build a database in Microsoft Access. Prior to writing the

grant that started this lab, I was writing commercial databases for

corporations. I put together this big whiz-bang application; it's bilingual;

in English and Spanish; it has verbal prompts if the people can't read.

And it did everything that you could possibly imagine with a minimum

number of clicks. The client would walk in the lab, find their name, click

their name, provide the last four numbers of their Social Security number

and press the button that said "in" basically, like a time clock. When they

left, they would find their name, put in their last four digits of the Social

Security number, click out and their screen would come up saying, "What

have you done?" And there were about 15 options; you're on the Internet,

you're working on your typing, you're working on your math, your GED,

job prep, playing games, whatever, and they leave.

What that gave us was within just a very short amount of time, incredible

records. We could determine that Jimmy, who I mentioned before, had

come in the lab 347 times, and he spent this many hours playing games,

and this many hours working on the spelling, and these many hours typing

or doing these résumés. We can also then do it the other way around. We

could try to figure out, we could look at our database and determine that

between 1:30 and 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon, we had more people in here,

adults doing typing than just about anything else, so we knew we had to

beef up our typing software, as well as people in the lab to help with the

typing. It was a great database. I wrote it in Microsoft Access 2.

We survived the year 2000 crunches, those of you that might remember

that, when we discovered that all the computers in the country weren't

capable of understanding the year 2000. We somehow got through it.

The database continued working. Then in 2002, it broke. We don't know

what happened. Remember, I'm the programmer. I couldn't figure it out.

Every time we'd use it, we get one or two records in and it would crash.

We couldn't get any information out of it. We couldn't put information in

it. We spent a great deal of time trying to figure it out. I kind of threw up

my hands. When you're working the computer, you don't have a lot of

time to focus on one thing. We switched to a very low-tech method of

record keeping.

M. Higgs   Legal pads and pencils?

T. Mahoney   Pretty much. Xerox papers with a name, time in and time out. So we

have stacks and stacks of those. We keep them sorted by date. And when

we get volunteers, we call everybody that helps out here a volunteer. We

sometimes get volunteers who are required to come here to do community

service or to help offset their food stamps or something. When we get one

of those that can help us, we try to transfer that information into an Excel

spreadsheet, just because it's a little bit easier to manage.

But what we lost when we lost our good database was just incredible

record keeping. We could pull out anything and be able to put it in the

beautiful bar charts and graphs and enabled us to go to any number of

funders with this corporate-looking materials and corporate-looking

statistics and the kind of numbers that talk to them.

Now, we can still do that with our current system. But if we want to find

out how often Jimmy was here in the last 3-years, we're pulling out binder

after binder and flipping through the pages and putting little "stickies"

next to Jimmy's name and then when we're done, we add them all up with

a calculator. So it's a great deal of work and less efficient.

When we go to funders now, if I were to be working on the grant right now and need to supply information about the age range of people and they want to know how many people are in here between the age of 35 and 45 and what they're doing. That takes an enormous amount of cross-referencing. We have to go to our client sign-in sheets, where we have their birth date. We figure out all the ones that are in the 40s and we have to keep a list of them while going through all these binders of timesheets.

In preparation for this phone call, Michele and I were talking yesterday, I pulled up the old database; I went looking once again to see if I could find if somebody had written the program that would convert my Access 2 database into Windows XP, Microsoft XP version of Access. I discovered something that made me feel vindicated as a human being, that it wasn't my lousy programming, although I'm a lousy programmer; it wasn't my lousy programming that broke the database. It was that we converted all of our machines, 3-years ago, from Windows 95 to Windows 98. Windows 98 will not run the things that we have our database doing. So late last night, I was at home, I installed the database on another computer that I have at the house and it works.

So where we're at is, we have had the Cadillac of a client-tracking

information and we've had the Pinto. While it's good, I'm sure there's

some good karmic return for having endured the Pinto and made the best

of the situation and sharpened lots of pencils and we have a number of

calculators around here. We're really excited that we might be stepping

back to the Cadillac, because it helps so much to have that kind of

information.

For example, our local community foundation was going through their

grant cycle. We needed a new server, and so we thought we'd ask them.

They wanted to know specific information about the age groups. They

weren't looking to find out how many 24-year olds were in here. They

wanted to know breakdowns in 5-year increments, kids 5 to 10, 11 to 15,

you know what I mean, all the way up to our eldest client, who, I think, at

that time, was like 86 or something like that. And they wanted to know

how many hours each of those age groups spent, what in general, they did

and they needed to do, what times of day they came, and what kinds of

resources by tabulating this stuff we thought they would need.

Now, why our community foundation wants to know all the stuff for

$2,000, I have no idea. But to complete the grant, I had to do that. We

did that with our Cadillac database. I think it probably took me about 2-

hours, and I punched it out, we had bar charts and pie charts and numbers

and stats and the appendix for the grant was about 25 pages long. The day

after I delivered the grant, they called me up all excited and said that they

had already decided. This was 2-weeks before the grant was supposed to

be awarded. We had just blown them away with our numbers. We got

the server, it is still running, the office I'm in at right now, the server is

running happily along, it runs all the computers in the lab.

On the other hand, we were working with Starbucks on an afterschool

program initiative. This was 2-years ago when we were driving the Pinto.

And Starbucks wanted information very much like that. We do not keep

demographic information; we don't have you check your ethnicity when

you walk in the lab. That's none of our business and if somebody wants to

track it, they'll have to figure something else out. But Starbucks wanted

very detailed information much like the community foundation did about

what kinds of people come in the lab. Because we were working with

Starbucks -- and the person we were working with since moved on; the

grant all fell apart; that's not unusual. It was nothing that we did wrong --

but we were able to get an extra 2-weeks to get together the information.

What took me a couple of hours on the Cadillac, took us 2-weeks.

Now, those of you in the labs know that there's no real ability to concentrate when you're at work. So that meant 2-weeks, every night at home; everybody that works at the lab was taking home stacks and stuff and compiling the information from them. Then we get together in the morning before the lab open, we'd pull together all the information into one unit, and then, we'd all take more stacks home that night. We did this for 2-weeks before we could come up with just barely enough information to keep their granting office happy.

Then we had to input all the information into an Excel spreadsheet, which we of course had to make. Then we had to convert all and get the Excel spreadsheet to print out bar charts, and anybody that's on Excel spreadsheets knows that the first five bar charts you put out are not anything remotely close to what you think they're supposed to be.

In the end, we put in much more work for the Starbucks grant. The office we were working with closed down, so we didn't get the grant. Nobody got the grant. They just pulled everything out. But we put in 400- or 500-hours writing a much shorter grant versus the community foundation.

Now remember, Greeley is rural, so maybe our community foundation is a little Podunk, but what they asked for wasn't. So the moral of the story is, even if you're not keeping records now—start. And if the best you can do is a Pinto, it'll still get you there. It's just kind of slow and ugly and people make fun of you.

M. Higgs   But you do get there?

T. Mahoney   We'll get there. We have gotten a handful of grants, nothing big. We are not a—we're a very small place. We don't go after big grants because our chances of getting them are slim. We tend to go after very small grants, almost like one of our regular partners, we call everybody a partner that helps us, gives us what he calls "love gifts." So we now go after on a regular basis, what we call "love gifts," which are small $1,000 – $2,000 grants, but they'll put in a new server or they will help replace some software or help us upgrade some software. And everything that we ask for is now being done with pencils and calculators and evenings and breakfasts, and it's not very efficient. So it's not only good for funders, trying to segue the conversation a little bit; it's good for my job performance appraisal. When my boss wants to know what's going on, if I hold up five binders and say, "well, look at all the people that have signed

in," that doesn't mean anything to him. So on a regular basis, I have to compile all the information and work up stats. I didn't have to do that with the Cadillac because it did it for me. But I also—it wasn't a requirement when I started the job. Those of us who have been doing this for a few years know that the jobs kind of swell like logs in the water, and we have more and more responsibilities as well as more and more oversight and more and more inspections.

When I first started, my boss was happy because we had people. Well, now he wants to know how many people, when they were here, what times of day are the busiest, can we do something different with the staffing, how is the room going, all those kinds of things. So we spend a fair amount of time with pencils and calculators, but it's still worth it because, well, I have my job, and from time-to-time, we do get some grants or love gifts.

M. Higgs   Yes. So you find that even using the pencil and paper is helpful just to have the information that you need just to be able to get the information together?

T. Mahoney   Yes, very much so.

M. Higgs   I mean like you're saying, even if you have a Pinto, you do have a vehicle.

T. Mahoney   You do get to go out from time-to-time. Any information is better than no information; good information is better than weak or bad information. My personality is such that I alternate between being rather—not disorganized, but rather kind of messy in my multitasking; that's a good way of putting that. And I alternate between being that, like my office looks like a bomb hit it, and very, very anal. And so I get very compulsive about the information. I get very compulsive about certain things and other things. I completely forget about to my detriment and probably detriment of the lab as well. But I do know having been in both cars and having known both of them kind of well, works with my personality. The more information, the more organized you can get it, the more consistently you can keep it and store it in whatever fashion, the better chance you have of justifying what you do for a living, justifying any money that people have given you or going out and asking for more money or just help.

We partner with the local university and from time-to-time, they will send class loads of students over which is kind of a nightmare. Twenty-five

19-year olds is a little hectic. But, the way that they know that we are a

good site to send their budding young boys and girls to is because the

information that we're able to provide them. They know that our lab does

XYZ because we have the numbers or the staff to back it up. When I gave

my little introduction, I said that we've had about 2,000 clients, 1,500

adults, of course, I rounded them up, but I can come up with pretty close

to those exact numbers. Also, I know how many hours our lab has been

opened.

We have a Head Start onsite. We work with the Head Start kids. They

are going through their every 5-year review. We received a request from

them for an estimate of the in-kind donations that we give to Head Start as

part of their granting process, and we were able to pull that together from

our binders of information. It was not graceful, but the information is still

worth having.

M. Higgs   Let me ask you a quick question before we even open up to questions. Do

you have volunteers that deal with this specifically, or is it you, a staff

member who is handling the collection of data or the monitoring of the

collection of data?

T. Mahoney   It's both. Volunteers come and go. When a volunteer shows an ability to be able to handle this information without messing it up, I mean, everybody makes a mistake, but I mean, without losing it or without tabulating it incorrectly. Then as we get to know the volunteer, we begin to trust them with more and more details. So when we have a volunteer that can do this, we give it to them faster that we can possibly think.

Our lab, we only—there's only one and a half people in the lab. We have a 1.5 full-time equivalent, and that's our lab, that's it. And in the past, we had AmeriCorps and VISTAs, but we no longer have them. So for a while, we had a staff of almost to eight people, but now we're down to one and a half. So any opportunities that we have to give any of this work away, I'm really happy to delegate.

M. Higgs   I can imagine. Now with the group of residents that you have on your site, how does that break down in terms of adults and children? Early on, you had said that there were several thousand that had passed through, but at this point, do you a sense of what your population is?

T. Mahoney   Yes. The population of the apartment complex itself is about 60 percent adults and 30 percent kids, give or take. It varies—you know, people

moving in and out. The population of our clients, which include people

from the entire surrounding communities, many communities, a woman

that's coming in now drives 45-miles each way everyday to come here, so

that skews the numbers a little bit. We now have about 75 percent adults

and 25 percent kids, plus our kids program is on a hiatus while we're

trying to get funding. So that really drops the kid numbers. But typically,

75 percent adults and 25 percent kids is what we see.

M. Higgs   And do you primarily do sign-in sheets for these people now?

T. Mahoney   Yes.

M. Higgs   That's the way you track how they come in?

T. Mahoney   We do sign-in sheets exclusively, and it's surprisingly easy to get them to

learn to use the sign-in sheets. I mean first there's a few snags, "Jimmy,

did you remember to fill out the sign-in sheet? Jimmy, you forgot the

sign-in sheet." A handful of those and Jimmy remembers and the adults

aren't much harder, they try to get use to it either. So almost everybody

signs on the sign-in sheets. They're kind of weird—this is my cheap two

cents--but there's kind of a weird feeling of ownership. When Becky

comes in the lab, she wants to sign in even if she's -- we have some people

that are required to be here as part of their federal funding, that they must

come here to work on their GEDs or must come in here to work on job

preparation, or something like that, and you know they sign in. But

almost everybody else, that's surely about 10-people a day that are here,

25 to 30 people that wander through this lab everyday. The rest of them

just want to sign in, it's kind of good—maybe it feels good. I don't know,

but they remember the sign-in sheets. We rarely have to chase people

down. We can try and stab them with the pencils but that doesn't work

here.

M. Higgs   Anything to do with those pencils. Anything else that you can do.

T. Mahoney   Yes. We go through a lot of pencils around there. Electric pencil

                  sharpeners are great inventions.

M. Higgs   One of the things that I was going to mention just in talking about this

                  whole topic was getting your residents or your participants to trust you

                  enough to give you information about themselves. Say for instance, if you

                  were going to do a survey, have you had that experience where you've

                  done surveys with your people? It sounds like they're invested. If they

want to sign in and they want to be there. It sounds like their invested.

T. Mahoney   There was a survey conducted at the property a year before the idea of

starting the Neighborhood Networks even came up. Then we had another

survey prior to buying any equipment or software to try to get an idea of

what the people wanted. And since then, I've done everything I can to not

have the same kind of surveys.

About every other year or so, some university student will come by and

they want to do a survey of some kind for a sociology class or something

like that. And we encouraged them, help them in any way we can, but we

also try to give them a dose of reality. If Tanya, who comes into the lab

every day, checks her e-mail, kind of is slowly working on her GED, she's

not terribly motivated. She lives here at the apartment complex, and I

know and I see her and she's in here all the time, and we have regular

potlucks here. Whenever anybody succeeds at anything, they get a

certificate and we have potluck.   Tanya is a regular at the potlucks.

If I go to Tanya's door and knock on it and she answers the door and says,

"Hey, Thom. What's going on?" I go, "Tanya, I got a few questions for

you." And I'll pull out a clipboard with a printed sheet of paper. Tanya

will become a mute. Our first two surveys that we had here, the first one

gave us a real good understanding of the educational level of our

residents. The second one gave us what we thought was an understanding

of what kind of computer resources they could benefit from. But it took

us 2-years to realize, to understand—I'm getting my sentence twisted up

here—the second survey, we said, "We're thinking about opening a

computer lab. What do you think you'd like to see?" that was basically the

survey, you know, 10 questions or so. What we've got in our responses

from our residents were a little skewed because I think they were telling

us what they thought we wanted to hear. So we had a surprising number

of them that wanted job skills training programs. Once the lab opened, we

found a surprising number of them that we're not interested in job skill

training programs at all.

Our surveys now are much more informal. We can get information very

easily and very quickly by doing what we called "door jamming",

standing in door and chatting. And for the listeners or the participants in

this conference call out there, those in the lab will probably know, we

have a hard time keeping our clients quiet. They walk in and they want to

tell us about their disability or their broken toe or their bad back or their

brother in prison or their sister who lives in another state and her Pinto

broke down, Pintos again.

M. Higgs   Yes. Those are big out there?

T. Mahoney   So when we want to get information, we are fortunate to have students

that want to do it in a formal structured way, and that's beneficial and we

learned a lot from that. But the reality check is what people talk about at

the potlucks, what the student's talk about in the community room at break

time. And we listen very carefully so that we discovered, for example, in

one of our surveys that we asked about—the students asked about the job

training software that we had and the answers were non-conclusive, of a

tapioca pudding, just they weren't even there.

What we found out from talking to them was, is that our job training

software that we were using was for lack of a better term, we call it

"negatively educational". Students were asked questions, which then they

got wrong because there was no lead in to it. And then the program would

then tell them why they were wrong. A lot of people may teach that way,

but nobody wanted to touch the software because after—I mean, you're

living in Section 8 housing, obviously your life has had a little bit of

difficulty. For whatever reason, you don't want to go to your computer lab

where a computer is telling you you're a moron. The student survey

showed that people were really ambivalent about the software. Our

statistics showed that people really weren't using it for very long. They

were staying on it for 20-minutes, 30-minutes. And then, it was the casual

conversations in "door jambs", over potlucks where people said, "Thom,

that software is really terrible. It makes me feel bad," and we knew what

to do. So just we use the Cadillac which we're really looking forward

going back to understand, we will always have some kind—I think that the

Cadillac, the students came in and click some buttons and signed on a

computer.

As we're talking about it this morning, we may continue with the sign-up

sheets: (1) in case the Cadillac breaks; (2) because that's what the students

are used to and it's easier to get them to sign up twice than it is to transfer;

and (3) maybe a computer doesn't give as many of them ownership as

reaching into this little bucket with these pens and pencils that we have for

the sign-in sheets with flowers taped on the top of them so they don't

disappear so fast, and they all remember to sign in. And so we may keep

the sign-in sheets. But just like—I was drawing a parallel between that

and job training software. The job training software wasn't doing its job

and we found that out in a combination of ways. And so we think from

now on, once we get the Cadillac going again, we're going to maintain a

combination of tracking mechanisms because the programmer could also

have been a moron and the statistics might not show us good stuff.

M. Higgs   I see. Back to that Cadillac and that Pinto.

T. Mahoney   Yes. I think some place—I think you mentioned in the introduction, I

used to be an auto mechanic, that's it, yes.

M. Higgs   That's where it comes from. Okay. Got you. It's a good analogy. It

really is. Pintos blew up at some point, didn't they?

T. Mahoney   Yes, but they doubled as a cigarette lighter.

M. Higgs   What I'd like to know now is shall we open it up for some questions? Are

you ready?

T. Mahoney   I'm more than ready and I think, probably everybody is tired of hearing

me.

M. Higgs   Barbara?

Coordinator   Yes.

M. Higgs   Can we open it up to questions now?

Coordinator   Yes, we can.

M. Higgs   Thank you.

T. Mahoney   We couldn't possibly have answered every single question.

M. Higgs   Anyone in the queue?

Coordinator   Our first question is from Brandon Felton. Please go ahead.

B. Felton   Yes. The first question is, I guess is how much for the Cadillac? And the

                     second question is, what are some of the realistic questions that some of

                     the funders are looking at based on basic evaluation data? I know when

                     you go for big boys, my assumption is that they would look for more

                     detailed information, but that's not necessarily true.

M. Higgs   Thom, you want to take that?

T. Mahoney   Sure. Good questions, Brandon. First of all, the Cadillac, I built it as a

                  consultant to the computer lab before the lab was started. And then the

                  first year the lab was in operation, I didn't work here, I just helped here.

                  So as soon as we get that thing working and assuming that our property

                  manager says it's "okey dokey" with him, we're going to figure out some

                  way to make the Cadillac available. If I have my druthers, I'm going to

                  put it on a Web page and everybody can download it and anybody can use

                  it or not. Its history isn't real great.

                  As for the kind of information that funders are really looking for, it really

                  varies everywhere. And you even alluded to that a little bit when you said

                  that when you deal with the big boys, sometimes they're not looking for

                  that detailed information. But there's some stuff that, I think, it's safe to

                  bet that is good to have stored or accessible or with pencils and

                  calculators, creatable. You want to know how many people are coming

                  in. You want to know how many individuals are coming in, as well as

                  maybe on an average, how many people are coming in a week or month or

                  year. So that Joe is one client, but he may come in 20 times a month, so

                  that's 20 visits. So when all of our numbers—the total number of people

as well as the total number of visits, we have some people that come in

every day for 2-years. And even if it's just to check their e-mail, but

that's-- what are there-- 260 working days in a year and something like

that, that's 500 visits that if we just say, well, one person.

I think you also want to keep track of what the people in general are

doing. If I am applying for a grant or writing a report or putting just

together stats that we pass out when we talk to the media or something, I

approximate; I always approximate, so that when I give my little spiel at

the beginning, I said we have about 2,000 clients. It was actually 1,960

something.

Only if someone is looking for hardcore, very specific, can you back it up,

can you prove to me that these numbers are genuine, and I've yet to find

that, I round the numbers, make them look—I mean, nobody really wants

to see weird, strung out numbers, so you can round them up a little bit.

The information that you're going to want to give out is how much time is

spent on the Internet versus playing solitaire or the Sims? How much time

is spent working on GED versus English as a second language, if you have

ESL? How many of your clients, either in percentage or number, are

working on job preparedness programs? How many of them are working

on, if you have like Microsoft Office, how many of them are trying to

learn Word, Excel or whatever? And having that information broken

down like that when you can get it.

You can always lump it together. You can always say, "Well, we have

2,000 clients and 1,500 of them are working on adult-based software."

And if that's all the number that somebody wants, you've got it right at

your fingertips. But if somebody says, "Well, we want to know what

those 1,500 adults are doing," then you can begin to break it down. For

the most part, I found most granting, again, I don't go for big grants.

We're a little tiny place. I found most the granting agencies or funding

agencies or even Rotaries and Kiwanis clubs, they're not actuaries. They

don't want to see gobs of statistics. And I can walk in and dazzle them,

well, when the Cadillac is working, with gigantic flow charts and all sorts

of trend analysis stuff like that, that I only barely really understand, but

they don't really want that.

For the most part, the kind of people that I talk to want general numbers. I

know the press. We deal with the press a lot. We have very good

relationship with the local media. And every time they come here, I send

them away with about eight or nine sheets of paper. And that has

information about the property, information about the lab and very much

the kind of stuff that I just said at the beginning and actually where I said

that information when I rattled it off at the beginning, I have about 10

sheets of paper spread out on my desk and I was just talking from the

sheets of paper and I printed them out from when the media was here last

week, last month, and I just used the same numbers.

Nobody wants to get inundated with statistics. I don't want to keep track

of statistics. I don't know about you, Brandon, but I can't imagine that

you really are running the lab so that you can spend your life in

spreadsheets. So I think that in just a general common sense, somebody is

going to ask you at some meeting some place, "Well, how many of your

clients come in that tie their shoes left-handed?" I can't answer that. But

it's not at all uncommon-- how many of your clients that have gotten their

GEDs from your lab have gone on and got jobs? Now, that number I've

got. Do you see what I mean? Did I answer your question or did I skirt

around it too much?

B. Felton   No. You touched on—what I wanted, I guess, my followup question is,

what do you put in your marketing materials, provided that you collect of

this data using a Cadillac, which is great, and what are the basic, maybe

give me a top five things that you may put out there in your releases or

when you're going after partners?

T. Mahoney   I will just literally look down at my desk right now since I stopped talking, I shuffled them around a little bit, and I'll tell you what's on my desk. I have not in any particular order, just going from left to right, I have one that called in 2004, Island Grove Village and the Grove Neighborhood Networks, the apartment complex and the neighbor of our lab. I've got a list of about 30 things or so that we accomplished, ranging from our company picnic and how many hotdogs we served, to how many people got their GED this year. It's kind of friendly. We got a better sense of humor when I'm counting up hotdogs and hamburgers and that goes everyplace we go: every marketing agency, every talk I give, the media, they always get that. That is the sheet of paper -- I made it – that says 30 things that we succeeded at this year. I don't have a companion piece that shows the 30 things we failed at.

Then I have another sheet, that's called "Facts About" and it's about four pages long. It's a large—these are all in box or bulleted formats, no big, great amounts of text. I have a couple of pages in the Facts About are literal facts about the complex and the computer lab. I just listed up the facts about the Grove Neighborhood Networks. I list a number of clients,

the total number of visits, the number of GEDs, the number of GED

clients currently working on their GED, the name and number of our staff,

which I said was one-and-a-half, a listing of our computer hardware, a

generic list of our software, a list of the most accessed software, the kind

of Internet connection that we have because everybody seems to want to

know that, and our Web page and e-mail addresses to reach us.

Below that I have a list about—it's called "About Our Volunteers".   It's

the total number of volunteers we've had since we opened, the total

number of volunteer hours since we opened, not including VISTAs, and

the total number of in-kind, if all the volunteers were paid minimum wage

in all those hours, how much that would have given to us excluding

VISTA money. And just so you know, that's $153,017 at $5.15 an hour.

So the next sheet of paper I have is something called "Things That

Happen At . . ." and it's a list of all the various kinds of things that we do

here at the lab. If you're seeing a pattern here, all of these sheets of paper

allow me to brag because I don't need to tell people my mistakes. So

these things that happen … it mentions our summer programs, our Head

Start, our English as a second language classes in the evenings, our

nutrition programs, our elderly groups, youth dances, resident council

meetings, computer lab, advisory committee, Web page, that kind of stuff.

And then, I have something that's called "Important Dates," and it has a

list of the important dates. It's only about 10 items long and that's on a

sheet of paper. But it tells when the complex was built, when the lab was

built, when the lab was extended and the last five items are the awards

that we've received and I change those around. We've received two HUD

Blue Ribbon Best Practices Awards; you know I'm mentioning that. And

a year ago—no, 2-years ago, 3-years ago, I guess it was, the Greeley

police, who we worked with a lot, named us the safest place to be in

Greeley. We have the lowest crime rate per capita on a property that just

5-years ago, everybody thought of us as one of the nastiest places. The

crime rate is probably still the same, but now we have all these pages of

really successful things and lots of hotdogs, and suddenly we look a lot

better. But we're still pretty much the same. I mean we're a very safe

place anyway.

And then the last page that I have is just basic boring numbers. It's the

numbers of apartments, the sizes of apartments, square footages of

apartments, the rents, and the number of people that are receiving

housing. And then once again, on that same sheet of paper, I put all the

lab statistics. So that then, how many people are coming in the lab, how

many are working on their GED, how many GEDs we had. So I describe,

I think it's about—I just described 10 sheets of paper and that's what I

take everywhere. And when I go—I was invited once to talk to Kiwanis

on Bridging the Digital Divide, and they gave me that topic. So I pulled

these documents up in Word, I resaved them for the Kiwanis speech and I

changed the tops of them, Bridging the Digital Divide: Facts About—and

I can tailor them to whoever needs them.

I mentioned at the very beginning that we're actually owned by a

nonprofit corporation, which is a part of the church. I give this

information to the church people once a year for the big year thing, and at

the very top of all the pages, your Island Grove Village and your

computer lab and they love it. It's the exact same numbers.

M. Higgs   Like a great marketing packet.

T. Mahoney   It's a packet. It's called boilerplate. I have this boilerplate. I've been

giving out these same pages for 9-years, and I'm the only one that seems

to be really, really tired of them. Everybody else loves them. I give them

to my boss and he's like, "Oh, good information." "Same stuff I gave you

last month." But he loves it and--

M. Higgs   That's okay.

T. Mahoney   Did I get closer this time, Brandon?

B. Felton   Very. Thanks for being so candid.

T. Mahoney   Yes. No. We're all in this together. I can't lie.

M. Higgs   Barbara, do we have anyone else on queue? We had one good question.

Coordinator   I'm showing a question from Mary Frances. Please go ahead, ma'am.

M. Frances   It's just a statement. I'm just in awe with our presenter. I really got a lot

                  of notes here.

M. Higgs   Great. Well, that's terrific. Did you hear that, Thom? This is great.

T. Mahoney   I appreciate that very much, Mary Frances, but it's all really just seat-of-

                  the-pants.

M. Francis   Well, I'm telling you, it's really—I've got it down on paper. Thank you.

T. Mahoney   I'll deny it all.

M. Higgs   Thank you.

Coordinator   I'm showing a question from Nedra Long. Please go ahead.

N. Long   My question is, "do you not partner with like a literacy council, anything

                    like that for any funding; have you ever done, I mean, like do you have a

                    local literacy council or--?" I know I've had experience with doing,

                    partnering in with our local literacy council and therefore, we were able to

                    get some funding to get extra programs.

T. Mahoney   Literacy councils, and there's a whole bunch of different kinds of them.

                    Like the AmeriCorps has some really strong programs and the retired

                    senior volunteer program is real good, and then there are various kinds

                    and we'll just lump them all together, if that's okay. We have worked with

                    them some, but our town is about 80,000 people, give or take a little, and

                    there are about two-dozen computer labs. About a dozen of them are

                    offering various kinds of GED or English as a second language. And the

clients that we get, I love my job, I love my clients, I believe in what I'm

doing, but we really are the last stop for most of these people. So there are

so many other places tapping the literacy councils and we'd love—there

are so many other agencies and labs and programs and afterschool

programs as well, hitting on the literacy programs that I don't. It's not a

hard and fast rule, but why throw my hat in the ring when there's a whole

bunch of other people who have better numbers.

For example, the local community college puts out over 300 GEDs a year,

so if I put my grant application next to theirs for funding for our GED

software or something like that and you're a grantor and you have the

grant from Aims Community College, "Wow! They had 300 GEDs."

"Oh, you guys had five." We don't have a chance. So I don't go after

those. Same reason why I don't go after-- there's a lot of really good

funding available for specific job training where you will agree with the

state to teach people how to do certain things so that then they can jobs.

There's good money available for places like that. We don't have the staff

to oversee that and it's just simply too hard to get a job. So, if I have 25

people come through that are funded in order to learn to do some job skill

or in some reading program, and it doesn't work out, it's kind of an easy

way for us to expose our many weaknesses. So we kind of, when I go for

money, I'm very delicate.

I also don't ask loud. Michele and I were supposed to do a conference call last month. I was sick and stood her up. I apologize publicly, Michele. And we were supposed to talk about partnering. I don't do partners like a lot of people do. My partners are all low-key, very quiet; we bragged about them constantly and tell everybody we can about them. But there's nobody—that's a partner that groans when I came and knock on their door, because I just don't ask for a whole lot. And only ask for things when I know that, for example, I can walk in with the numbers or the statistics so that then they feel good helping me. And with literacy councils, that's a big arena. Why take the chance at failing? Does that make sense or do you think that's nuts?

N. Long   No, that's good.

T. Mahoney   I mean, it very well could be nuts. I mean I have yet to find a reasonable manual that tells me how to do my job. I just fake it.

N. Long   There isn't. It's trial and error.

T. Mahoney   The error part I'm very good at, and I make a lot of mistakes, and I just

make very small mistakes so I can hide them better.

M. Higgs   Thank you.

N. Long   Thank you.

T. Mahoney   Thank you.

M. Higgs   Barbara, have you anyone else?

Coordinator   At this time, I'm showing no further questions.

M. Higgs   In that case, I just have a couple of statements I'd like to make because

                  we're coming close to closing, I believe. Does this sound like a lot to you,

                  people? I mean, there's a lot of information that you've gotten today and a

                  lot that has to be gotten together to do a good tracking and evaluation

                  program at your centers. If it sounds like a lot, you just start, and use a

                  START business plan, which has a demographic reporting form that can

                  be helpful in tracking and evaluation. You knew I had to talk about

                  START, right? By using this form, you can track such data as a number

                  of residents, race, gender, education level and START will calculate and

maintain an accurate record of demographics makeup as a center. Having

this information ready and available to assist center planners in selecting

programs and services that are most appropriate for residents.

Further, by going to www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org, START can help

you identify programs that will be most valuable to residents. Since by

surveying them, they help you design the programs that most closely

address their interest and needs, which will make programs available that

will be most popular and make the center useful and active. START is

just the beginning, however. It gets you off to a good start; get it,

"START"? And helps you to calculate the numbers, but you know your

people and your environment best. And it's very important for you to

develop your own questions and your systems as well as to get to such

issues as attitude and aptitude, things that numbers can't always measure.

I just needed to do my one commercial for START. Barbara, I'm going to

ask you one more time, are there any other questions?

Coordinator   At this time, I'm showing no further questions.

M. Higgs   All right. Well, it seems like we have no more questions, Thom. And I

thank you very much for being with us this afternoon. And I thank all the

participants who've called in today. I want to remind all of you of the

resources that are available to you through the Neighborhood Networks

initiative. Aside from the Neighborhood Networks information line,

which (888) 312-2743, you may find resources available on the

Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org.

Thom, once again, I thank you for your presentation, and I thank all you

participants for participating in the conversation today. And I remind you

that our next conference call will take place on Tuesday, April 19th at 3:00

p.m. on the topic of "Identifying Labor Market Trends in Your

Community." Thank you, all, again. Take good care.

T. Mahoney   Thank you, Michele.

M. Higgs   All right, Thom. Thank you.

T. Mahoney   Bye-bye.

M. Higgs   Bye-bye.

Coordinator   Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your participation on today's

conference call. At this time, your conference has been completed and

you may now disconnect.

M. Higgs   Thanks, Barbara.

Coordinator   You're quite welcome.

M. Higgs   Bye-bye.

Coordinator   Bye-bye.